

*AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS*

Figure 2 is amended to remove reference numbers not mentioned in the specification.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet(s)

*REMARKS/ARGUMENTS*

In response to the Office Action mailed December 20, 2006, Applicant amends his application and requests reconsideration. In this Amendment all examined claims, claims 1-17, are cancelled and are replaced by new claims 18-29, which are the claims now pending.

The Examiner noted that certain reference characters in Figure 2 are not mentioned in the specification. A corrected Figure 2 is submitted. That figure does not include those reference numbers.

The error in the specification mentioned in the Office Action is corrected and other informalities in the same paragraph are also corrected.

The rejection of claims 8 and 10 as indefinite is moot in view of the cancellation of those claims. Care has been exercised in preparing the newly submitted claims to avoid similar issues.

Four new independent claims are presented here. Those claims are based upon combinations of originally examined claims. Further, the language of the claims is changed, consistent with the disclosure of the patent application, to avoid confusion and potential ambiguities. Independent claims 18 and 21 are directed to a gaming machine apparatus. Claims 18 and 21 are similar but claim 21 does not claim the portable memory device that is claimed in claim 18. The portable memory device, sometimes referred to in the examined claims as the storage medium, may be any of numerous known memory devices, as described in the patent application from page 12, line 25 through page 13, line 10. The term "portable" means that a person carries this memory device, which might be similar in size to a credit card, from game machine to game machine in a casino. Each game machine, according to the pending claims, includes a game medium retrieving device and a value recording device. These structures may correspond, for example, to the read/write device 36 and the random access memory 33 as described in the patent application at page 21, lines 2-

physical game media, a term that encompasses coins, see page 15, line 11, and chips, see page 47, line 5 of the patent application.

The game machines according to the invention interact with and read from the portable memory device a balance, referred to as a game medium value, that indicates a money value available for purchasing game plays on the respective game machines. As game play proceeds, this balance is decreased in purchasing game plays and is subsequently changed, in the recording of a game result value, which may be positive or negative change, depending upon the nature of the game supplied by the game machine and its payoff.

An important feature of the game machines according to the pending claims is the selectable paying out of physical game media at the game machine being played as all or part of a game payout. See page 22, lines 11-24 of the patent application. The payout may be in part or in total recorded in the portable memory device, see page 23, line 15 through page 24, line 1 of the patent application. The player of the game may selectively choose how credits for a positive game outcome are received. With respect to the example of the slot machine described in the patent application, this election regarding the nature of the payout is made through button 24, referred to as the C/P button. See the patent application at page 15, lines 9-11 and Figure 1. This feature of the invention was at least partially described in, for example, examined claims 4 and 5.

Dependent claims 19 and 22 are derived from examined claim 10 and describe the fact that a player can increase the number of credits on a portable memory device by inserting physical game media into the gaming machine that is interacting with and connected to the portable memory device. New dependent claims 20 and 23 are derived from original claim 13 and make clear that when a payout occurs in physical game media, any part of the payout that is not supplied in that physical form is recorded in the portable memory device.

Claims 24-26 and claims 27-29 are additional sets of claims directed to gaming machine systems including a large number of gaming machines that function in

different ways, for example, by requiring different minimum bets or different denominations of minimum bets. These groups of claims are similar in structure to the claim groups 18-20 and 21-23 and, therefore, do not need explanation in addition to that provided above with regard to claims 18-23.

Although all examined claims have been cancelled so that the prior art rejections are moot, it is apparent that no claim now pending can be anticipated by nor suggested by either of the publications applied in the rejecting the examined claims. Of those examined claims, claims 1-3, 6-8 and 15-17 were rejected as anticipated by Raven et al. (U.S. Patent 5,429,361, hereinafter Raven). Dependent claims 4, 5, and 9-14 were rejected as unpatentable over Raven in view of Dickinson et al. (U.S. Patent 5,265,875, hereinafter Dickinson). These rejections are respectfully traversed as to the pending claims.

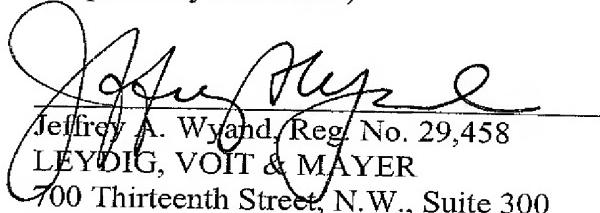
Raven was cited because it describes “cashless” gaming. In the most relevant description within that patent, either a passive credit card-like device or an active smart card device is issued to a player who then uses the card in the playing of various game machines. The passive card requires that the gaming machines be connected in a network for confirming an available balance whereas the smart card maintains a running balance, somewhat like the portable memory device of the claimed invention. The objective of Raven, as described in column 1, lines 38-48, is cashless gaming so that carrying of large sums of cash and obtaining change in the course of playing games is not required. There is not even any contemplation by Raven of any physical game media payouts at gaming machines at the option of the game player. Thus, while cashless gaming is achieved by Raven, the excitement associated with coin or chip payouts is completely removed from the gaming experience. The sterility of the experience and its impact on other players within the casino dampens enthusiasm and can have an adverse effect on inducing plays by others in the casino. Moreover, the paying of physical game media in the invention is contrary to the “cashless” gaming objective of Raven.

Dickinson, in pertinent part, is similar to the disclosure of Raven. Dickinson further describes that upon the completion of cashless play using a credit card-like device, the player retrieves the card from the game terminal and takes the card to a validation terminal. At the validation terminal, a ticket showing a cash balance is issued. Using that ticket, a player can obtain cash "on the spot". Cash, according to the Office Action, meets the definition of physical game media.

There is no suggestion in Dickinson of dispensing physical game media, be it coins, chips, or some other physical item, at the game machine in the course of game playing or at the option of the game player. Rather, Dickinson, like Raven, exalts the transition from only physical game media to a total absence of physical game media. In Dickinson, the game player can move from terminal to terminal using the same ID card that carries a cash balance. The play can ultimately "cash out" at a cashier. However, Dickinson offers no relief to the bland experience of a player using the Raven system. There is no opportunity in Dickinson, or Raven, for a player to increase his excitement, and that of others in playing game machines in the same room, by a payout, directly at the game machine, of physical game media with associated visual and audible indicia of a jackpot. Accordingly, no combination of Raven and Dickinson can suggest any claim now pending.

Reconsideration and allowance of claims 18-29 is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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